

Anti-Israel Bias at the United Nations: What Actions can Canada Take?

Institutional discrimination and chronic one-sidedness undermine the UN's effectiveness and its credibility with our citizens. Canada can help counter this through actions in the UN system and at our diplomatic missions more generally.

Anti-Israel positions and attitudes in UN bodies feeds a vicious circle, which is used to equate these positions as support for anti-Zionism and antisemitism. Canada must work to counter demonization and deligitimization of Israel, and the application of double standards to Israel.

B'nai Brith Canada seeks structured dialogue with officials attending high-level UN meetings, including the autumn General Assembly, and opportunities to engage Canadian diplomatic staff prior to postings.

- The institutional bias against Israel in the UN stands in sharp contrast to the organization's founding principles. Israel is the only UN member subjected each year to a series of one-sided resolutions in the UN General Assembly and to relentless scrutiny by bodies within the UN system, the work of which has become promoting the Palestinian cause against Israel. Canada has opportunities to more diligently support a democratic Israel and combat actions tended only to isolate it from being an important contributor to the international and UN system.
- Israel has been repeatedly censured and singled out by the UN Human Rights Council. Most egregious is the Council's agenda Item 7, which subjects Israel to permanent indictment. Israel is the only country that is subject to a separate, stand-alone agenda item, while human rights violations in all the other countries are considered under one single agenda item (agenda Item 4). We call on Canada to lead with other like-minded UN members to eliminate the discriminatory Item 7 from the UNHRC agenda.



- We regard UNRWA as a deeply flawed agency, guilty of longstanding political bias against Israel, and one which detracts from peace through its education activities which promote an oft-stated justification for defensive (obligatory) jihad. The curriculum used by UNRWA appears to have expanded from demonization of Israel to providing a rationale for war. B'nai Brith Canada would welcome plans to restructure or create alternative delivery mechanisms to UNRWA. In the absence of such an alternative mechanism, we understand that UNRWA's collapse could lead to deterioration in the economic, health and ultimately security conditions in the Palestinian areas, to the detriment of Israel's vital interests. Canada, as an important donor, must lead the effort to have UNRWA strictly implement a principle of 'neutrality' defined in the liberal sense and to comprehensively reform its approach to education.
- Israel, a UN member since 1949, has never been elected to the UN Security Council, despite the fact that it is an island of stability in an otherwise volatile region. Some argue that the Israeli-Arab conflict is so contentious and so central to the work of the UNSC that it would be unfair to elect one of the parties to that conflict to the Council. The fact is, however, that Israel's Arab neighbors, parties to the same conflict, have been elected multiple times. We urge support for Israel's candidacy to the UNSC for the 2019-2020 term or a future term.
- We see a growing tendency for UN specialized agencies to depart from their mandates and introduce extraneous resolutions that are not consistent with their aims and intended only to punish Israel. Periodically, such resolutions are camouflaged as to intent or implications. There are opportunities for Canadian officials to emphasize that this pattern is unacceptable and to insist that specialized agencies, for the sake of efficiency and effectiveness (if nothing else) adhere to their mandates.
- We would welcome understanding by Canadian officials that, 'what happens at the United Nations does not stay at the United Nations' as they reflect on their diplomatic work. Resolutions which seek to demonize and delegitimize Israel are used as justifications for anti-Israel actions in other bodies. A recent example is the 138th General Assembly of the Interparliamentary Union.



United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA)

Various materials have been submitted that raise issues with UNRWA educational materials, the attitudes of educators and staff, links with organizations of concern (including Hamas), and textbooks provided by the Palestinian Authority. Among these (but not only these) are:

- *UNRWA in Gaza and Terror Groups: The Connection* – Monograph prepared for the European Parliament by the Center for Near East Policy Research – March 24, 2009.
- *Report on UNRWA Teachers' Incitement to Jihadist Terrorism and Antisemitism*. UN Watch before the United States Congress – February 2, 2017.
- *Canada and UNRWA: Enhanced Due Diligence?* A Report by UN Watch – April 10, 2017.
- *Schoolbooks of the Palestinian Authority: The Attitude to the Jews, to Israel and to Peace*. A study by Arnon Groiss and Ronni Shaked, for the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Middle East Forum – September, 2017.
- *The Palestinian Authority Curriculum for 2017-2018: Reform or Radicalization?* By the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education – October, 2017.
- *Israel, Jews and Peace in Palestinian Authority Textbooks Now Used in UNRWA Schools*. A review by Arnon Groiss -- December 4, 2017

These concerns have been raised with Global Affairs Canada and direct with UNRWA officials. There are as yet no signs that the curriculum being used by UNRWA, based on materials provided by the Palestinian Authority, addresses shortcomings which demonize Israel and Jews and which detract from any semblance of peace; nor do they comply with any reasonable interpretation of the concept of neutrality.



- Radicalization is pervasive across the new curriculum, to a greater extent than before.
- The curriculum exerts pressure over young Palestinians to acts of violence in a more extensive and sophisticated manner. The discourse is couched in terms of nationalist and religious martyrdom, across science, literature, history and religious education textbooks.
- The version of the PA curriculum of which we are aware educates for a long war of attrition against Israel in an ideological sense.

With a comprehensive and oft-stated justification for defensive (obligatory) jihad, the curriculum's focus appears to have expanded from demonization of Israel to providing a rationale for conflict with Israel.

As best we interpret it, the new, reformed curriculum of the Palestinian Authority has further distanced itself from UNESCO-derived standards of neutrality.

- B'nai Brith Canada calls upon Canada to explain, through a more transparent process, how its 'enhanced due diligence' framework is operating to ensure that educational materials used by UNRWA are not detracting from Canada's overall goals in providing assistance to UNRWA and other UN agencies, and Palestinians in the Middle East.
- B'nai Brith Canada seeks regular dialogue with Canadian officials to understand Canada's positions on UNRWA reform and to better understand the functions and conclusions of UNRWA's 'neutrality coordinator' and how that position is working to reinforce Canada's goals.
- B'nai Brith Canada believes that UNRWA activities are not contributing to the creation of a climate conducive to achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and believes that Canadian assistance, beyond that provided for strict humanitarian requirements, must be conditioned on improved UNRWA performance.



United Nations Human Rights Council

The UN retains singular potential to serve as a force for global good. However, with deeply negative implications for the standing and effectiveness of the UN itself, Israel continues to be subjected to unequal treatment and outright systematic bias within the world body.

The UNHRC, despite efforts to “reform” its predecessor Human Rights Commission through creation of a successor institution, seats serial rights violators and maintains a unique agenda item – “Item 7” – on Israel alone, with more condemnation of Israel than the rest of the international community and with a special rapporteur (or monitor) focused narrowly on purported violations against Palestinians. It is past time for “Item 7,” singling out Israel for unjust stigmatization and opprobrium, to be removed from the Council agenda.

Council resolutions, commissions and reports prejudge then often “confirm” Israel as uniquely guilty of severe violations. This pattern – of excoriating Israel alone and only then “investigating” – was repeated with a “commission of inquiry” following Israel’s war with Hamas in Gaza in the summer of 2014.

The UN Human Rights Council’s main 2018 session concluded on March 23rd, with 1 resolution on North Korea, 1 on Iran, 2 on Syria, and 5 on Israel. These five resolutions criticize Israel only, and make no mention of abuses by Hamas or the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority. The Council passed zero resolutions on human rights violations by China, Cuba, Egypt, Qatar, Pakistan, Venezuela, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and UAE, nor on Turkey, Algeria, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, etc. In addition, the UNHRC session heard more reports on Israel than on Iran, Syria and North Korea combined.

The UNHRC must shift to a responsible, unbiased stance on human rights and Middle East issues, rather than serving as a political tool and ‘fig leaf’ for rogue regimes. If propaganda-based efforts against Israel are encouraged and allowed to be exported to other important global bodies – such as the International Criminal Court, where Palestinians have sought to pursue legal action against Israelis – prospects for calm and reconciliation in the Middle East will only be further harmed.



Despite ongoing external condemnations, Syria continues to enjoy near-impunity at the UNHRC in its significant acts of domestic repression. The persecution of the Baha'i faithful in Iran, and too often Christians throughout much of the Middle East, is essentially tolerated. Reform of the Human Rights Council to deal with these important concerns has fallen short dramatically.

In the March 2017 session, Britain delivered an exceptional statement calling out the anti-Israel bias of the UNHRC, warning that “neither “terrorism” nor “incitement” were a focus of the Council discussions and resolutions” and that “this is not acceptable”. The UK shift in voting patterns in 2017 and 2018 has also related to opposition to the introduction of a “database” that would blacklist companies doing business with Jews living east of the 1949 armistice line. The United Kingdom has stated it will not cooperate with the blacklist.

- B'nai Brith Canada calls on Canada to state unequivocally its concern over the integrity of the UN Human Rights Council, given its anti-Israel bias and to work with like-minded countries serving on the Council to support their own strong statements.

United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

B'nai Brith International had a consultative relationship with immediate past Director-General Irina Bokova, whose term ended in November 2017, and is looking forward to continuing this engagement with new Director-General Audrey Azoulay of France.

B'nai Brith International, which maintains on-the-ground representation at UNESCO, has partnered with the agency on Holocaust education issues and jointly held major symposia on areas of Jewish culture, specifically the Yiddish and Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) diasporic languages.

However, B'nai Brith has watched a series of particularly concerning developments at UNESCO over the years – both within the Executive Board and the agency's World Heritage Committee – which threaten UNESCO's credibility in areas that are supposed to be among its core competencies: historical and cultural preservation. These trends



have led both the U.S. and Israel to declare an intention to withdraw from UNESCO in 2018, citing the unrelenting bias at the organization.

Since UNESCO decided to recognize Palestine as an independent state in 2011, the Palestinians have used UNESCO as a forum to internationalize their conflict with Israel. The Palestinians have used this status at the organization to push for especially offensive anti-Israel resolutions, further politicizing UNESCO.

UNESCO resolutions over recent years have: listed the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem as Palestinian heritage sites; attempted to rename even Jerusalem's Western Wall using an Arabic designator and to appropriate it as part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque (a recent resolution eventually designated the sacred landmark with the Arabic name followed by the placing of "Western Wall" in quotation marks); and sought to erase Jews' connection to our single holiest site, the Temple Mount.

- B'nai Brith Canada calls on Canada to insist that UNESCO remains focused on its primary mandate and resist efforts to twist its work for political purposes that are anti-Israel in nature

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

B'nai Brith Canada sees justification in recent reports of the civil society organization, NGO Monitor, finding fault with UNICEF for an anti-Israel bias – see *'UNICEF and its NGO Working Group – Failing Children'* of January 7, 2018.

UNICEF spearheads a campaign to have Israel included on a UN blacklist of "grave" violators of children's rights. The list appears as an annex to the UN Secretary-General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC). This political agenda is a primary facet of UNICEF's activities relating to Israel, completely inconsistent with its mandate of "child protection" and from its guidelines for neutrality and impartiality.

UNICEF is actively supporting anti-Israel boycotts and there is evidence adduced by 'NGO Monitor' that funds donated by Canada for UNICEF education programmes are being misused by organizations to which UNICEF had transferred the money and which



promote the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. UNICEF invested the funds in the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Program, which trains boycott, divestment and sanctions movement activists from around the world. As part of their training, activists at times use antisemitic rhetoric in the anti-Israel campaigns they introduce in churches around the world. Another BDS organization by the name of Christian Peacemaker Teams is also reported to have received some of the Canadian funds

- B'nai Brith is implacably opposed to BDS, and any support for it, as inherently antisemitic in nature.
- B'nai Brith Canada seeks a response from the government on the veracity of 'NGO Monitor's' claims and, if they are correct, what steps are being taken to ensure that any monies provided UNICEF are not used in support of BDS activities.
- B'nai Brith Canada calls on the government to work with like-minded countries and closely monitor projects to ensure that U.N. agencies do not transfer taxpayer money to radical political organizations disguised as human rights groups.

Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian Territories Michael Lynk

B'nai Brith Canada has long viewed with concern the clearly biased activities of Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur for human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Mr. Lynk's mandate cannot be seen in isolation. Israel is the only country that is the continuous target of three standing UN bodies established and staffed solely with the purpose of advancing the Palestinian cause in a manner threatening to Israel – the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People, and; the Division for Palestinian Rights in the UN's Department of Political Affairs.

B'nai Brith has long considered Michael Lynk unqualified and biased, rendering him incapable of undertaking his work professionally and neutrally. We emphasized this in





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our public statement of December 4, 2017. The organization NGO Monitor published a highly critical and credible report of Mr. Lynk's antisemitic and anti-Israel actions on March 20, 2018, *'The UN's Weakest Lynk'*. In 2016, then-Canadian Foreign Minister Stéphane Dion stated his disapproval of Mr. Lynk's appointment, tweeting: *"We call on @UNHRC to review this appointment and ensure Special Rapporteur has the track record that can advance peace in the region"*.

- B'nai Brith Canada calls for a formal re-statement by the government of concerns over Mr. Lynk's qualifications, and an expression of serious reservation over Mr. Lynk's ability to fairly discharge his mandate.



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